

Commerce Committee Hearing on FCC Commissioner Ness

Statement of Senator Olympia J. Snowe

March 22, 2000

Mr. Chairman, the world of telecommunications is changing and advancing at an unprecedented pace, which leads to ever-increasing demands on the FCC. In light of these rapid changes and increasing demands, it is critical that prospective FCC Commissioners have the knowledge, experience, and ability to forge coalitions that are needed to effectively do their jobs. All of these attributes are possessed by Commissioner Ness, and I strongly support her re-appointment accordingly.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that Susan Ness is not only well-qualified to serve at the FCC during this critical juncture in telecommunications history, but she has also proven herself to be an invaluable member of the commission who would leave a substantial void if the full Senate fails to re-confirm her in the weeks months ahead.

For instance, not only does Commissioner Ness chair the Federal-State Board on Universal Service B a job that requires a close working relationship and ability to build coalitions with state and local governments and private companies B but she has also led the charge for American interests as the lead representative from the FCC at the 1995 and 1997 World Radio Conferences.

However, there is more to being an FCC Commissioner than simply being knowledgeable of the issues or the leader of a delegation -- there is also a need to be a stalwart for enforcing the laws passed by Congress as intended, and to have a vision for how the numerous policies carried out by the FCC will converge and impact Americans for years to come.

Again, I believe that Commissioner Ness has a proven record in this regard, and I hope that she will use today's hearing to highlight not only her

credentials and experience, but also her zealousness to enforce the laws as intended and her vision of telecommunications in the next century.

In the process of laying out her vision for the 21st Century, I do not ask that Commissioner Ness pre-judge matters that are currently before the FCC or that will likely be before the Commission in the upcoming months. Rather, I am hopeful that she will give us a broad view of how she sees telecommunications technologies affecting the lives of the American people and what role she sees the FCC playing to facilitate the development and introduction of these technologies in the marketplace. Because ultimately, new technologies are not created to simply build a better mousetrap -- rather, they are built to better people's lives.

I would like to thank Commissioner Ness for being with us this morning, and look forward to a robust discussion of her experience and vision that will shape her approach to numerous telecommunications issues in the years ahead.

Ultimately, I believe Commissioner Ness stands second to none in terms of her experience and qualifications to serve a second term at the FCC, and urge that my colleagues move toward the rapid consideration and re-confirmation of Commissioner Ness in the weeks ahead. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.